



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

Office of the Secretary

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Overview of the Maryland Department of Agriculture Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee Acting Secretary Joe Bartenfelder and MDA Staff Tuesday, January 27, 2015

Overview of Maryland's Agricultural Economy

According to a recent study (2010) by the University of Maryland, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, the total impact of agriculture, forestry and agricultural services on Maryland's economy is \$8.25 billion in total output and \$3 billion in value added.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA) reports that in 2013:

- Agriculture generated nearly \$2.31 billion in cash receipts for the state's farmers.
- Maryland's leading cash commodities were broiler chickens, greenhouse/nursery products, corn, milk and dairy products and soybeans.
- There were an estimated 12,400 farms in 2013 with an average size of 165 acres.
- Total land in farms in Maryland was 2.05 million acres, one-third of the state's entire land area.

History of the Maryland Department of Agriculture

MDA was established as a principal department of state government in 1973. MDA's focus on one particular sector of the economy (agriculture) is unique and reflects the recognition by lawmakers of agriculture's contribution to the state's economy, cultural diversity and quality of life.

The importance placed on promoting agriculture is made clear in Section 2-103(h) of the Agriculture Article in which the general powers and duties of the Secretary are defined: "The Secretary has general supervision, direction and control of the provisions of this article and generally to all matters in any way affecting or relating to the fostering, protection, and development of the agricultural interests of the state."

MDA's Mission and Vision

Mission: To provide leadership and support to agriculture and the citizens of Maryland by conducting regulatory, service and educational activities that assure consumer confidence, protect the environment and promote agriculture.

Vision: To achieve excellence in services that preserve and protect agricultural resources and the environment, promote profitable agriculture and consumer confidence, and enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders.

MDA Units within the Department

MDA comprises four principal units. These four units include 39 budgetary programs with 66 primary activities and 423 employees. The MDA's operating budget for FY 2015 is \$96.8 million of which only 28.5 percent is comprised of General Funds.

The four units are:

1. **The Office of Marketing, Animal Industries, and Consumers Services** – This unit includes programs that ensure the wholesomeness and quality of Maryland farm products; safeguard against the introduction and spread of disease that can threaten vital animal industries; promote the production and consumption of Maryland agricultural products, and ensure fairness to consumers in the marketplace. Specific programs include Animal Health, Food Quality Assurance, Marketing and Agricultural Development, Weights and Measures, the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, the Maryland Horse Industry Board, the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board, and the Governor's Advisory Commission on Maryland Wine and Grape Growing.

The budgets of several independently operated programs are combined with this unit and include the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, the Tobacco Transition Program, Rural Maryland Council and the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation.

2. **Office of Plant Industries and Pest Management** —This unit administers programs and enforces state or federal laws, regulations and quarantines related to management of pests that affect the health of crops and forests, application and disposal of pesticides within the state, mosquito control, pollinator health, quality of commercial agricultural products sold in Maryland, quality of seeds and turf, and control of noxious weeds. There are six programs: Forest Pest Management, Mosquito Control, Pesticide Regulation, Plant Protection and Weed Management, State Chemist, and Turf and Seed.
3. **Office of Resource Conservation** – This unit works closely with Maryland farmers to plan and implement conservation practices or best management practices (BMPs) and programs that balance crop and livestock production with the need to protect natural resources. Resource Conservation provides a range of educational, financial, technical assistance, and regulatory programs to support Maryland agriculture and protect natural resources for future generations. The office works with a number of local, state and federal agencies, while implementing policies of the State Soil Conservation Committee. This unit is made up of five programs: Conservation Grants, Nutrient Management, Program Planning and Development, Watershed Implementation, and District Operations.
4. **The Office of the Secretary** – includes the Office of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Principal Counsel, Communications and Public Relations, Government Relations, and the Maryland Agricultural Commission. The office also includes the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, and the Administrative sections of the Department.

Highlights of MDA Programs

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) -- MALPF is the oldest agricultural land preservation program in the country, founded in 1977. At the end of FY 2014, MALPF had purchased easements on a cumulative total of 2,154 properties, permanently preserving more than 293,000 acres.

Office of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services

Food Quality Assurance -- The following activities can be found within this program: grading services, compliance audits, egg inspection, organic certification, grain laws, and poultry and rabbit slaughter certification providing consumer confidence and food safety services. For example, under MDA's grading service program, MDA's graders sample commodities and certify them for various food quality issues. This provides a uniform basis for agricultural commodities that enhances their marketability. MDA's compliance audit services ensures agricultural production facilities comply with standards related to animal welfare, good agricultural practices, food security, food safety and quality assurance. Through this program, MDA developed its Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) food safety program for fruit and vegetable producers.

Animal Health Program -- This program works to prevent and control infectious and contagious diseases in Maryland livestock and poultry with emphasis on those diseases that threaten the public health, endanger food supplies or threaten the economic security of the animal industries. The program responds to all animal emergencies under the State Emergency Operations Plan. MDA also operates a veterinary diagnostic laboratory system consisting of a livestock health laboratory in Frederick and a poultry health laboratory in Salisbury. Both labs are long-standing members of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, a USDA program. Examples of activities in the animal health program include examination of animals moving into and out of Maryland, inspections at animal exhibitions and noncommercial herds and flocks, quarantines, the animal disease traceability program and disease surveillance and response and assisting local animal control agencies to protect animal welfare.

Weights and Measures -- The regulation of weights and measures is one of the oldest continual functions of government, impacting the lives of all consumers in one way or another. MDA's Weights and Measures Program ensures that consumers get what they pay for whether it's a gallon of gasoline or a pound of hamburger. There are a total of 60,618 weighing and measuring devices in commercial use in Maryland at nearly 9,100 separate business locations. MDA has 18 inspectors who are specially trained and certified to inspect these devices. In FY 2014, the field staff investigated 641 customer complaints with the majority of complaints involving gas stations. Consumer complaints take priority over routine inspections and require a significant amount of staff hours to investigate.

Marketing and Agricultural Development -- MDA works to connect farmers and processed food producers with wholesale buyers to capitalize on the demand for local food products. MDA also has an international marketing program that works to open new markets abroad. Maryland's Best is the marketing arm of MDA and works to connect farmers with markets: consumers,

grocery stores buyers, food distributors, chefs and international buyers. More than \$600,000 has been received through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant to support these marketing efforts. The marketing office includes co-producing the Maryland Public Television “Maryland Farm and Harvest”, the Jane Lawton Farm to School Program, the Annual Buyer-Grower meeting, the Maryland Ice Cream Trail, the Ag-Tourism signage program (in conjunction with the State Highway Administration) and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (providing vouchers to WIC recipients and low-income seniors). Marketing also includes the “Spay and Neuter Grant Program” which provides grants to organizations that offer spay and neuter services.

Office of Plant Industries and Pest Management

Programs in this Office are important to both agricultural and non-agricultural communities and the general population. It is staffed with many scientific and technical employees including entomologists, plant pathologist, agronomists, chemists, and seed analysts.

Mosquito Control – West Nile virus (WNV) continues to be the mosquito-borne disease of greatest public health importance in Maryland. In 2013, 16 human cases, including one fatal case, were reported by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Eastern Equine Encephalitis, one of the most severe mosquito-borne diseases in the United States, was also detected in Wicomico and Worcester Counties. The Mosquito Control Section provides a vital public health and quality of life service to Maryland residents in more than 2,500 communities in 16 counties through mosquito control work, mosquito borne disease surveillance, public education, and enforcement. MDA carries out aggressive and timely responses to reduce the number of infected adult mosquitoes, reducing the risk of transmission to humans and animals.

Pesticide Regulation – This program regulates the use, sale, storage and disposal of pesticides. They enforce state and federal pesticide use laws and regulations to ensure that pesticides are applied properly by competent individuals so that potential adverse effects to human health and the environment are prevented. This section conducts pesticide applicator certification and training, pesticide use inspection and enforcement, pesticide technical information collection and dissemination, and enforcement of Maryland’s Integrated Pest Management in Public Schools and on School Grounds law.

Plants Pests and Quarantines – The nursery and greenhouse industry continues to be a leading part of Maryland’s agricultural economy, currently ranking second among commodities, with a total of \$960 million in farm income. The Nursery Inspection Program facilitates the production, sale, and distribution within and out of state of Maryland nursery and greenhouse products. This is accomplished through annual licensing and inspections of all producers and suppliers of nursery stock in the state, and assisting with compliance with other states’ and federal quarantines. Plant pest surveys help to protect Maryland’s plant producers as well as the environment in the state through early detection of exotic plant pests. The Forest Pest Management Program is responsible for minimizing losses due to insect pests and diseases affecting high value forest and landscape trees in Maryland. When serious outbreaks occur, they cooperate with local jurisdictions and the federal government to control infestations of high impact pests such as gypsy moth and hemlock woolly adelgid.

High Quality Turf and Seed – The Turf and Seed Section encourages production of quality seed and sod. The seed testing lab checks seed for purity, germination, and other crop and weed contaminants. Inaccurately labeled, poor quality, or misrepresented seed lots are removed from the marketplace. The section also tests farmer-produced small grains for use in cover crop program. The seed laboratory has five seed analysts certified by Association of Official Seed Analysts on staff.

State Chemist - The State Chemist Section performs an important consumer protection function by regulating the sale and distribution of pesticides, feeds, pet foods, fertilizer, compost and agricultural liming materials through registration, inspections, and sampling to ensure quality, content, and accurate labeling of registered products.

Other functions of this Office include protecting and promoting honeybees, certifying ginseng for export, supporting integrated pest management, and providing laboratory diagnostic services.

Office of Resource Conservation

Program Planning and Development – This section is responsible for planning, developing and coordinating policy, programs, and public information about resource conservation activities and nonpoint source pollution. Programs and activities are coordinated among local soil conservation districts, federal and state agencies and public and private agricultural and natural resource organization. This section administers the Animal Waste Technology Fund, a \$2.5 million fund to support alternative uses for manure.

Conservation Grants – The Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program provides conservation grants to help farmers install water quality improvement projects on their farms, adopt sustainable agricultural practices, and comply with federal, state and local environmental requirements. This section also includes the Cover Crop Program (one of the most cost-effective and environmentally promising ways to control soil erosion, and reduce nutrient runoff), the Manure Transport Program, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and the Manure Injection and Incorporation Program.

Resource Conservation Operation – This program provides operating funds, staffing and supporting resources to the state's 24 soil conservation districts for the promotion and delivery of local soil conservation and water quality programs.

Nutrient Management Program – This program protects water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries by ensuring that farmers and turfgrass professionals apply fertilizers, animal manure and other nutrient sources in an effective and environmentally sound manner. All farmers grossing at least \$2,500 a year or livestock producers managing at least 8,000 pounds of live animal weight are required to follow nutrient management plans when fertilizing crops and managing animal waste. These science-based plans specify how much fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources may be safely applied to individual crop fields to support crop growth while preventing excess nutrients from contaminating waterways. This program also oversees certification, licensing and education programs related to nutrient management plan development and professional turf fertilizer application.

Watershed Implementation Program – The role of the agricultural sector in meeting Chesapeake Bay restoration goals are coordinated through this program. Coordination with related state agencies and the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program work to establish goals, develop tools to track implementation and evaluate progress. It also includes the Agricultural Certainty Program, and the Nutrient Trading Program.

MDA Communications

MDA's Communications Office works to keep the public and other stakeholders up to date on all activities within the department.

- MDA maintains a comprehensive website that uses a responsive design template, which makes the site easy to navigate on a desktop or mobile device. The staff updates the sites regularly. It is: www.mda.maryland.gov
- Maryland's Best – the marketing arm of MDA – also maintains a website and a searchable database that helps connect consumers with growers at: www.marylandsbest.net

Social Media

The MDA Communications Department also has a robust social media presence which is monitored seven days a week. It not only provides more avenues to communicate with the public and agricultural professionals but also actively engages with people by answering questions, correcting errors, stopping rumors and promoting the good work of the agricultural community. All are invited to follow along.

Twitter:

- Main MDA Twitter Account: @MdAgDept (www.twitter.com/MdAgDept)
- Maryland's Best (MDA Marketing) Twitter: @MdsBest (www.twitter.com/MdsBest)
- Maryland Horse Industry Board Twitter: @MdEquines (www.twitter.com/MdEquines)
- Maryland's Farm to School Twitter: @MDFarm2School (www.twitter.com/MDFarm2School)

Facebook

- Main MDA Account: www.facebook.com/MdAgDept
- Maryland's Best: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Marylands-Best/89703601400?ref=hl>
- Maryland Horse Industry Board: www.facebook.com/MarylandHorseIndustryBoard
- Maryland Farm to School: www.facebook.com/pages/Maryland-Farm-to-School/135831876430648?fref=ts

For more information about MDA, see 2014 Annual Report at:

http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/14mda_ar.pdf